

March 19, 2020

Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I am writing to all of you at St. Rita Parish as your priest moderator and in union with Lisa and Msgr. Murphy. As you know, with the rapid spread of COVID-19, Archbishop Sample had to make the difficult decision to suspend all public Masses and community activities at all Archdiocesan parishes until the civil authorities lift the ban on public gatherings when the COVID-19 subsides. I know this is a very difficult time for all of you, especially the loss of being able to be present at Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion and share in Catholic community with each other. Nevertheless, I want you to know that both Msgr. Murphy and I continue to offer up our private Masses daily and on Sundays for your intentions and in union with your spiritual communions.

The unknowns, the constant flood of information, the fear and anxiety, as well as the physical separation are all taking their toll on us. Nevertheless, our Faith teaches us that the Lord Jesus Christ abides with us during these trying times and that God will never abandon us. The same is true for the Church and St. Rita Parish: Even though we are physically separated for the time being in order to protect our most vulnerable members of the community, the Church and the Parish are still here and will continue to be here with you and for you. This year's Lent is truly a penitential time in ways we could never imagine, yet we can look at this crisis from a Lenten perspective and see it as a gift: A gift to reassess our priorities, to enter more deeply into the solitude and silence of the Lenten desert fast, to reach out and stay connected with each other in ways that perhaps we did not feel so urgently in the past. We can all do something to stay connected with the Lord and with each other during this time of solitude and waiting.

Here are some things I offer for us to stay connected and know that I am here for you:

1. If anyone needs to talk, seek spiritual counsel or prayer, please call me. My number is 503-233-8326. If I don't pick up, leave a voicemail and I will call you back ASAP.
2. Lisa is also available to call and/or email you in response to any needs or questions you may have. If you have prayer requests, please leave them with Lisa and I will make sure they are included in my private Masses. Lisa will also provide links to the Archdiocesan website for more information and for viewing Masses that are livestreaming.
3. Please note that for health and safety reasons we are only bringing Communion to the sick, doing visits, or Anointings for emergency calls only. "Self-communicating" Holy

Communion does not exist as a practice in the Church. Thus Holy Communion can only be brought to parishioners for emergencies or last rites.

4. Regarding the celebration of Holy Week and Easter, at this time the public celebration of these liturgies are currently suspended as well. However, the Archbishop and the Office of Divine Worship are preparing to communicate directives and guidance to all parishes regarding how, when and under what circumstances to celebrate the RCIA Rites that will initiate our catechumens into the Church and baptize the infants. Right now we do not know if these will be permitted at Easter or if they will need to be rescheduled to later in the Easter Season when the bans on public gatherings are lifted. We will keep you posted. The Church requires the Holy Week liturgies to be celebrated, but this year we will have to do so privately and/or with only a server and a lector.
5. Lisa will also share with you links for continuing to financially support St. Rita's. Your generosity will help the parish continue its mission over the short-term and long-term, and will ensure a smooth transition to regular ministries after the COVID-19 subsides.
6. The Parish will periodically send out email-blasts and FB postings with more information, updates and links to spiritual resources during our Lenten Pilgrimage. Please be on the lookout for these.
7. Please do your utmost to maintain your Lenten practices, especially prayer and works of mercy for the needy and the poor. As the Church we must not abandon those in most need. Our St. Vincent de Paul Pantry is open and will remain so as long as possible to serve the poor and homeless, with proper precautions taken into account.
8. When we receive word that normal parish activities can resume and public Masses and sacramental celebrations we will let you know with scheduling information.

Finally, let us please pray to the Lord through the intercession daily to St. Michael the Archangel and St. Rita for the cessation of COVID-19 and for the health all the suffering and afflicted and protection for our healthcare workers and all people, especially the most vulnerable. Thank you for your continuing prayer and support. We will get through this together. I very much look forward to the day when we will all gather at the altar of the Lord once again in thanksgiving and prayer. Until then, let us pray.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Todd M. Molinari